

# CENTRE FOR HUMAN RELATIONS AND COMMUNITY STUDIES

## Background of the Centre's Conception

Sir George Williams University is the outgrowth of a formal education program started in 1273 by the Montreal YMCA. This program developed into a collection of YMCA schools. In 1924, two year programs in arts, science and commerce were expanded to four years culminating in a bachelor's degree for successful students. In 1948, Sir George Williams College was granted a charter as a university and in 1959 this charter was amended to change the name to Sir George Williams University.

The fundamental educational philosophy of the University focuses on the development of the individual and the correlated activities. The student's development is not expected to be accomplished by mere rote learning but to include vital experiences which are related to, if not a part of, a daily living process. "For example, attitudes, or ways of feeling

toward one's fellow men, are the products of one's growth as is the attainment of information, important though this may be.

## SIR GEORGE WILLIAMS UNIVERSITY

From this kind of a historic development the University's orientation to serving its community and dealing with the real needs of its members can be seen. In its early development as a College, Sir George Williams University offered courses which met the requirements for professional certification in the Canadian YMCA. Young people from across Canada came to the University to take these courses and many of them worked part-time in the Montreal YMCA to help finance their college education. Over the years, these courses have been expanded to provide for the needs and interests of students considering a vocational career in community serving agencies. Eleven courses in the Department of Applied Social

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In planning for the development of the department of Applied Social Science, it was felt that an operational arm should be added for several reasons. The University's orientation to the needs of the community encouraged it to respond to requests for assistance in the Applied Social Science fields. More appropriate assistance to these agencies could be provided if an organization, such as the Centre, were set up to deal with such requests. This would enable community organizations to receive help on immediate problems from University staff with background in the various behaviorial sciences.

From the viewpoint of the Department of Applied Social Science, a Centre to handle operational programs would meet several important needs. First, it would provide an arena for action research which University staff could work on and thereby contribute to the development of the behaviorial sciences. Action research and similar projects dealing with problems of communities and community serving organizations provide excellent experiences for staff to be on the growing edges of the profession and enable them to keep up to date on changes and problems in a cross section of community organizations. This in turn helps to keep vital the courses they teach in relation to current happenings and to the field situations students are and will be involved in professionally.

Finally, a Centre and its varied projects in the community would provide opportunities for students to have laboratory experiences related to their courses. Chemistry, physics and psychology use the laboratory to help keep principles and practices related, and to help students to learn by doing. For classes such as group development, guidance, community leadership and understanding group behavior, a lab-



oratory component is found in the Montreal community and its service organizations. Experiences for students related to projects of the Centre enables them to deepen and sharpen their classroom understandings. In view of the possibilities of developing a graduate program in the applied behavioral sciences, a Centre that is well recognized for its contribution across Canada would not only assist in attracting top calibre graduate students but would also provide opportunities for research, experiences in human relations training and community consultation, and possible part-time employment through research assistantships.

With these factors in mind, a Centre for Human Relations and Community Studies was established in September, 1963, as part of the Department of Applied Social Science. Hedley Dimock, who had recently joined the full-time staff as Chairman of the Department of Applied Social Science after several years of part-time teaching, was appointed Director of the Centre.

#### CENTRE OBJECTIVES AND POLICIES

The statement of purpose of the Centre is as follows: "The Centre for Human Relations and Community Studies is a research, consultation and training service of the Department of Applied Social Science, Sir George Williams University, Montreal. The work of the Centre is designed to promote an understanding, *of the human dimensions of a community as and the social* environment in which they operate and to provide information, procedures, and training programs that have direct application to the solution of organization or community problems. The Centre is staffed by professional psychologists, sociologists, educators, and social workers."

The Centre was established to provide resources for community serving organizations. The groups may

include health, education, recreation, government, camps and social welfare. While these groups are given first priority in requests to the Centre, business and industrial groups are not excluded.

The Centre is interested in working with organizations on continuing programs or following specific problem areas through to their resolution. Usually the project Director or consultant from the Centre will join a planning committee from the client organization in its early stages of planning and will stay through to an evaluation of the project. In this way the consultation can be intergrated into the main stream of the organization and not become just a "Demonstration" without leasting effects.

The research interests of the Centre are aimed at helping to solve organizational problems. It is not interested in research of a purely theoretical nature whose implications cannot be directly applied to increasing the effectiveness of communities or organizations. Consequently, most of the studies are of the action research variety where data is collected during the normal operation of projects.

The Centre is a non-profit organization but is expected to finance its <sup>own</sup> ~~won~~ operation within the University. The Centre has a general scale of fees which apply to its services and during the first year this ranged from fifty to one hundred a day plus Centre overhead and expenses. Some projects of value to the community were undertaken without charge as they provided good learning experiences for Department students.



## CENTRE STAFF

During the first year of operation, the following people made up the staff for Centre projects.

- Hedley G. Dimock, M.A., Ed.D. Director of the Centre and Chairman of the Department of Applied Social Science.
- Hubert Guindon, M.A., L.Ph. Associate Professor of Sociology.
- Gerald Mahoney, M.A., Ph.D. Chairman of the Department of Psychology.
- Harold Potter, M.A. Chairman of the Department of Sociology.
- J. Alexander Sproule, M.Ps.Sc. Director of Guidance Services.

The following were Centre Staff Assistants:

- R. Bruce McFarlane, B.A. Executive Director, Verdun LaSalle YMCA.
- Rix G. Rogers, M.Ed. Secretary for Program & Staff Development, Montreal YMCA.

Others involved in Centre Projects were:

- E.N. Beckett, Consultant, Management Development, Northern Electric Company, Montreal.
- Prof. C.W. Hall, Assistant Director, Institute of Education, McGill University.
- Dr. L.P. Patterson, Director, Mackay Centre for Deaf and Crippled Children.

New members of the Centre Staff for 1964-65 include John Hopkins, M.S.W. Staff associate; and Glen Gray, B.A. and A. Ross Seaman, M.Ed. as staff assistants. In January, 1965, Joseph P. Zweig, Ph.D. will join the staff as Research Consultant.

### CENTRE PROJECTS

In its first year, the Centre was swamped with requests for assistance by community serving organizations and professional associations. Twenty-nine requests for Centre resources were made, six were turned down because of lack of time of Centre staff, three were either outside the Centre's area or did not materialize, and twenty were undertaken. It is interesting that all but one of the requests came to the Centre through first hand knowledge or a personal referral, only the one came through the Centre's limited publicity during its first year. Seven requests came during the month in which the Centre opened.

Of the twenty projects, eight were with community serving agencies; one was a direct request from a community, six came from professional groups, two from coordinating councils, and three were consultations with the Federal government. In five of the projects, the Centre staff acted as a resource or consultant, and seven programs were directed by the Centre staff using the resources of the sponsoring organization. All but one of the projects were with community serving groups and the one was a business executive group. All but two of the projects were carried out within the Centre's general fee structure.

### STUDENT PARTICIPATION IN CENTRE ACTIVITIES

The participation of students in centre projects was quite limited. Most of the projects were out of town (14 out of 20) and of those at home, only one presented opportunities for students to work within their areas of competence. This project involved eight students taking a course in principles and practice of guidance and provided them with an opportunity to assist

in a group guidance program under the supervision of Centre staff. The students evaluated this project as one of the most meaningful experiences of their University education. Several students were also active as participants in a training program which the Centre assisted in designing and operating.

#### RESEARCH AND PUBLICATIONS

One of the Centre's projects during the year was the assessment of the impact of a human relations training laboratory on the participants. This is an eight month project as it follows up change months later to get a picture of actual changes made on the job. It is still continuing.

Two of the Centre's long term research projects were continued as additional data was gathered. One is a study of attitude change resulting from different types of leadership training programs. It will be reported in a Centre monograph next year. The other project, dealing with the selection and prediction of success of group leaders, was added to with additional group data. Its final processing is awaiting additional financial support.

No publications were made by the Centre or its full-time staff this year. The first monograph of the Centre was written but was not printed until the fall of 1964. Its title is "Intercultural Relations Training", and it reports on a project for Indian and non-Indian Youth in Central Alberta.

#### A LOOK AT THE FUTURE

Generally, the Centre exceeded all expectations during its first year. The first year was expected to be an experimental year meeting with community organizations to discuss how a Centre for Human Relations could be of assistance. Following a



community survey of this nature, the Centre expected to set up an advisory committee and establish carefully planned organizational structure. The numerous immediate requests for service moved the Centre into operation very quickly and its organization developed on a flexible basis out of its projects. Further work is needed in the future to provide a more administratively sound organization, yet one which retains its flexibility. An advisory board is expected to be formed in the near future and among the Centre staff a policy and planning committee will be established.

The Centre operated on a very sound financial basis its first year. It is clear that community organizations, professional groups and the government are quite prepared to pay fairly expensive fees for professional resources. A University subsidized Centre of this nature is quite practical and enables clients to receive assistance at about half of what the services would otherwise cost them. For the community and expanding professional growth opportunities for its students and staff.

*provided a closer link with the University it*

It is planned that the second year will see a consolidation of the Centre's operating structure, additions to the staff, more careful selection of Centre projects, an increase in student participation, and more activity in the research and publication area.